

SEDER 2021

A ONETABLE GUIDE



For so many, another year of celebrating Passover virtually is deflating, the antithesis of so much of what the Seder represents: performance, participation, peoplehood. After all, at the core of the practice is storytelling, ritual, and symbolic reenactment. Don't these things require an IRL experience?

We now know the answer is no.

Meaning can be made virtually and in small groups with the right intention and the right tools. It is with this in mind that we created the OneTable Seder 2021 guide. **This is not a Haggadah, rather a gloss, a real time supplement that offers introductions – poetry, lyrics, mindful reflections – to be read aloud before each section of the Seder.** Choose a Haggadah works for you, and use this resource to add meaning, set intention, and make your Seder a testament to the timeless power of ritual.

KADESH: SANCTIFYING TIME

The Space Between Us

Yes, the space between us is scary.
It is odd and at odds,
an area unoccupied where all things exist.
But the space between us is also liminal,
a threshold between old and new.

And so, in this space anything is possible:
to grow without gathering,
to connect without congregating,
to create without convening.

Which means the space between is sacred.

Yes, the space between us is scary.
But scared and sacred are so close —
and we need to make space for both.

—Rabbi Jessica Minnen

URCHATZ: HAND WASHING

The beginning of the seder seems strange. We started with Kiddush as we normally would when we begin any festive meal. But now we are going to wash our hands without a blessing, dip vegetables in salt water, and break matzah without eating it. What's going on here?

It seems that the beginning of the seder is kind of a false start. We act as if we are going to begin the meal but then we realize that we can't. We can't really eat this meal until we understand it, until we tell the story of the exodus from Egypt. So we interrupt our meal preparations with **karpas** (vegetables), **yachatz** (breaking matzah), and **maggid** (storytelling). Only once we have told the story do we make Kiddush again, wash our hands again (this time with a blessing) and break matzah and eat it. The meaning is clear: In order to savor this meal, in order to appreciate the sweet taste of Passover, we must first understand it.

— Adapted from Rabbi Rona Shapiro



KARPAS: VEGETABLES

Lines Written in Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

-William Wordsworth

YACHATZ: BREAKING MATZAH

Anthem

The birds they sang
At the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
Has passed away
Or what is yet to be

The wars they will
Be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
Bought and sold
And bought again
The dove is never free

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in

-Leonard Cohen





MAGGID: STORYTELLING

Four More Questions

Why is it that people around the world still live under oppressive regimes that limit their intellectual, religious, and economic freedoms?

Why is it that people in my own wealthy nation go hungry, with no bread, or matzah, or vegetables, or bitter herbs to eat?

Why is it that so many people still fight against our right to choose whom to love and whom to marry?

What can I do, in my own way, to fight the scourge of oppression, the slavery of poverty, the limits imposed by prejudice and intolerance, and to empower more people to be free?

—Adapted from [The Good Men Project](#)

Before the Ten Plagues

We are isolated, but as tempting as it is to lean into the imagery of the plagues, we do not want to do so. Because COVID-19 is a terrible pandemic, but not a plague. The most dangerous part of associating COVID-19 with the ten plagues is not about the malady's origin, but about our response. When the Israelites sequestered in their homes and painted blood on their doorposts, they did it to distinguish themselves from the Egyptian households. When we stay home, it is instead a recognition that [there are no distinctions](#) to this disease; whatever we do is not primarily for ourselves, but for our neighbors and coworkers and others we do not know. Our houses have no blood on the doorpost, neither for protection nor identification. We await not a personal salvation, but an all-clear for everyone. Unlike that midnight in Egypt — we, all of us, are in this together.

—Adapted from [Passover and the Pandemic](#) by Michael Bernstein

WHAT CAN COVID-19 TEACH ME?

RACHTZAH: HAND WASHING

It is reminding us that we are all equal, regardless of our culture, religion, occupation, financial situation or how famous we are. If this disease treats us all equally, perhaps we should too.

It is reminding us that we are all connected, that the false borders we have put up have little value — this virus does not need a passport.

MOTZI: BLESSING MATZAH I

It is reminding us that life is short. What is most important for us to do is to help others, especially the most vulnerable in our community.

It is reminding us that our true work is not our job — that is what we do, not what we were created to do.

MATZAH: BLESSING MATZAH II

It is reminding us to keep our egos in check. No matter how accomplished we are or how much control we think we have, a virus can bring our world to a standstill.

It is reminding us that the power of freewill is in our hands. We can choose to look only after ourselves, or we can choose to cooperate, share, and give.

MAROR: BITTER HERBS

It is reminding us, by oppressing us for a short time, of those in this world whose lives are spent in oppression.

KORECH: SANDWICH

It is reminding us that this can either be an end or a new beginning. This can be a time of reflection and understanding, where we as a global society, learn from our mistakes.

It is reminding us that after every difficulty, there is always ease. Life is cyclical, and this is just a phase in this great cycle. *Gam zeh ya'avov* — this too shall pass.



SHULCHAN ORECH: FESTIVE MEAL

And the people stayed home.
And read books, and listened, and rested,
and exercised, and made art, and played games,
and learned new ways of being, and were still.
And listened more deeply.
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.
Some met their shadows.
And the people began to think differently.
And the people healed.
And, in the absence of people living
in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and heartless ways,
the earth began to heal!
And when the danger passed,
and the people joined together again,
they grieved their losses,
and made new choices, and dreamed new images,
and created new ways to live
and heal the earth fully,
as they had been healed.

-Kitty O'Meara

TZAFUN: AFIKOMEN

That Which Comes After

The thing is, the Passover Seder is Hellenist,
Modeled after the Greek symposium.
[Synagogue](#), [afikomen](#): Greek words.

We are indebted!
Yet we talk about tradition as if it is singular,
Judaism as if it is One Thing.

In reality, it is Many.
And so tonight, a symposium of One
Among the Many.

I cannot hide the afikomen from myself.
Instead, I will seek to remember
How much is borrowed, how much shared.

Afikomen is a loan word,
Greek for [that which comes after](#).
We inherit more than we know.

-Rabbi Jessica Minnen



BARECH: GRATITUDE

It's a remarkable thing that Jewish tradition seeks to inspire us to be present before we eat, and all the more so that we are then directed to acknowledge our gratitude *after* we eat — gratitude not for the food itself, but for the incredible feeling of being full.

What does it mean to truly be fulfilled?

In Hebrew, the root of the word for fulfillment — to be whole, to be complete — is *shalom*, the same as the word for peace. May we find peace, a whole and complete peace. May we be fulfilled, not only by our food, but by our actions and our words.

HALLEL: SONGS OF PRAISE

Amen

The betrayer who is betrayed.
The deceiver deceived.
Away! Away!
What away?
Away to where
in the yellow air?
To the meadow that was?
To the lambs just birthed?
To the falling birds?

In our standing up, though a little bent — dayenu.
With our eyes seeing though blurred — dayenu.
With our ears almost hearing — dayenu.
Upon our lying down and our rising — dayenu.
On our remembering our beloved's name — dayenu.
On our kneeling down — dayenu.
By the skin of our teeth — dayenu.
In our heart that expands and contracts — dayenu.
In our worried heart, fearful and afraid — dayenu.
Amen.

-Tuvia Reubner
Translated by Rachel Tzvia Black





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